CLAIMS:

1.   A method for managing a workflow on the basis of the workflow definition information for defining the flow of service through the use of a processing apparatus, comprising the steps of:

corresponding a processing node of a virtual workflow defined according to a requester's purpose with a processing node of an actual workflow that is the actual service;

acquiring a node of said actual workflow being currently processed; and

comparing said acquired node being currently processed with a node of said actual workflow definition related with the node of said virtual workflow definition, and outputting as a progressing state of said virtual workflow the processing state of the node of said actual workflow being matched to said node being processed or previous to said node being currently processed and closest to a candidate node, and a virtual node being related with said candidate node having an access right of said requester.

2.   A method for managing a virtual workflow as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the steps of: when said virtual workflow is defined, specifying a node to be opened as a node of said virtual workflow of nodes composing said actual workflow and setting a right of operation of said requester of said specified node; and

registering a virtual workflow definition for

connecting said set nodes with an arc.

3.   A method for managing a virtual workflow as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the steps of: before outputting the progressing state of said virtual workflow, determining the corresponding actual workflow definition to said virtual workflow definition by using the attribute defined in said virtual workflow definition; and inputting execution information of said virtual workflow by using said determined actual workflow definition.

4.   A virtual workflow managing system for managing a workflow as accessing workflow definition information for defining a flow of service, comprising:

     a storage unit for storing virtual workflow definition information containing ID information of a virtual workflow definition, ID information of nodes contained in said virtual workflow definition, and access right information given by the user of said virtual workflow definition at each node; and

     a workflow link definition information storage unit for storing an ID of the corresponding link to the link with a combination of ID information of said node of said virtual workflow definition, ID information of an actual workflow definition, and a node of said actual workflow definition.

5.   A method for managing a virtual workflow as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

     inputting information for selecting virtual workflow definition information; and

determining a virtual workflow definition used by said selected virtual workflow definition on the basis of said input information.

6.   In a workflow system having a client and a server, a method for managing a virtual workflow comprising the steps of:

holding a virtual workflow definition composed of virtual nodes defined according to the purpose of use of said client, an actual workflow definition composed of actual nodes corresponding to an actual service, and a workflow link definition for indicating correspondence between said virtual workflow definition and said actual workflow definition, on the basis of an indication given from said client;

searching an actual node corresponding to a virtual node specified by said client, based on said workflow link definition; and

outputting a processing state of said searched actual node as a progressing state of said specified virtual node to said client.

7.   In a system for managing a virtual workflow having a client and a server,

said server comprising:

an information storage unit for storing a virtual workflow definition composed of a virtual node defined according to the purpose of use by said client, an actual workflow definition composed of an actual node corresponding to an actual service, and a workflow link definition

for indicating correspondence between said virtual workflow definition and said actual workflow definition;

a processing unit for searching an actual node corresponding to a virtual node specified by said client, based on said workflow link definition; and

a processing unit for outputting a processing state of said searched actual node as the progressing state of said specified virtual node to said client.

8.   In a storage medium being readable by a computer for storing a program of a method for managing a virtual workflow, executed by a sever in a workflow system having a client and a server, said managing method comprising the steps of:

holding a virtual workflow definition composed of virtual nodes defined according to the purpose of use of said client, an actual workflow definition composed of actual nodes corresponding to an actual service, a workflow link definition for indicating correspondence between said virtual workflow definition and said actual workflow definition, based on an indication given from said client;

searching an actual node corresponding to a virtual node specified by said client, based on said work- flow link definition; and

outputting a processing state of said searched actual node as a progressing state of said specified virtual node to said client.

9.   A method for managing a virtual workflow as claimed in claim 6, wherein said virtual workflow defini-

tion holds information about a type of an operation right of said client against said actual workflow definition at each virtual node.

10.   A method for managing a virtual workflow as claimed in claim 6, wherein each of said virtual nodes contained in said virtual workflow definition corresponds to said actual node contained in a plurality of actual workflow definitions.